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SUBJECT: PKK Issue: Update on Violence and Political Developments  
(November 1-15, 2006)

REF: ANKARA 6300 and previous

(U) Sensitive but unclassified - please protect accordingly.

11. (SBU) This is another in a series of periodic reports on PKK violence in Turkey. Our primary sources for these reports are mainstream Turkish press services, such as the Anatolian News Agency, and international wire services. While these are more reliable than most Turkish press sources, they are not necessarily unimpeachable. Another source is the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff (TGS) website which documents contacts/clashes with the PKK. Press services sympathetic to the PKK, such as Neu-Isenburg People's Defense Forces and Firat News Agency, tend to report higher numbers of the Turkish Security Forces casualties and are often otherwise unreliable.

12. (U) During the November 1-15 period, three Turkish security personnel were injured when they stepped on a PKK mine. During the same period, Turkish security forces killed three PKK terrorists in clashes in Sirnak province. 14 PKK members were arrested, including three who were turned over to security officers by the Iraqi KDP and two who were turned over by Syrian authorities. Security forces detonated or seized landmines, hand-grenades, RPGs, rifles, RPG-7 rocket ammunition, electrical fuses, bullets and C4 and A4 plastic explosives in different locations.

13. (U) "Milliyet" on November 3 quoted eight PKKers, who surrendered to security officials and subsequently released, as testifying to authorities that the PKK banned their communication with their families when the number of those who fled the terrorist organization went up. They said that the PKK was planning more assassination attacks in Turkey. They also alleged that recently Americans went to Qandil Mountain and met with PKK leaders Murat Karayilan.

14. (U) Following are political comments by Turkish and Kurdish officials:

-- TURKISH OFFICIALS:

- In an exclusive interview in "Hurriyet" on November 5, FM Abdullah Gul warned that Iraqi Kurdish leaders -- specifically Barzani and Talabani -- were on the verge of an historic mistake. He listed his warnings as:

-- Do not pursue an independent Kurdistan;

-- Give up your illusion to take over Kirkuk;

-- Do not protect the PKK.

Gul went on, "Talabani and Barzani, by trusting the U.S. presence in Iraq, should not be too ambitious. They should not forget that the Republic of Turkey will survive in this region forever. The U.S. will leave after some time." Gul asserted that the Iraqi Kurdish leaders were hurting their friendship ties with Turkey and added, "If they are clever and if they think about the territorial integrity of Iraq, they should try to win Turkey's friendship."

On the establishment of a special envoy position, Gul told "Sabah" in its Nov. 6 edition, "To tell the truth, we initially were not in favor of the special envoy position introduced by the U.S., but the U.S. wanted to coordinate the issue internally. The PKK is one of thousands of issues for the U.S. But it is our number one issue."

- At a Nov. 3 meeting of European Interior Ministers in Antalya, Turkish Interior Minister Aksu claimed that to this point more than 35,000 people had been killed and more than \$100 billion spent in the fight against the PKK.

- November 4, papers quoted Turkish National Police Spokesman Ismail Caliskan as saying that the police were releasing PKKers who had not otherwise committed a crime. Caliskan stressed that those who were not involved in a crime were immediately released after providing testimony under the "effective repentance" clause of the Turkish Penal Code.

- Dailies on November 10 quoted CHOD Gen. Yasar Buyukanit as saying,  
ANKARA 00006508 002.2 OF 002

"Americans say that we should talk to the Iraqi Government [about the PKK] but nothing changes. They say that there has been a legitimate government in Iraq. Then they should come and protect the border."

15. (U) Following are selected columns on the topic:

- "Radikal" columnist Murat Yetkin ran a three-part column starting on Nov. 13 which recorded the events of this past summer, when the GOT threatened to carry out a cross-border operation into northern Iraq.

Yetkin recounted the July 15 PKK ambush in Siirt province, which left seven soldiers and one village guard dead. The following day, FM Gul called for an extraordinary meeting of the Anti-Terror High Council, and on July 17, the Turkish cabinet convened. During the same hours, Yetkin wrote, the Turkish MFA summoned the U.S. and Iraqi ambassadors and stressed that unless they took steps against the PKK, Turkey would take all necessary measures, implying that it would enter Iraq. The U.S. reportedly realized how determined Turkey was.

During this period, PM Erdogan instructed then-CHOD Gen. Ozkok to do whatever was necessary to secure the border region. Yetkin wrote that the U.S. further learned of this mobilization from satellite imagery and from the Iraqi Kurds.

Yetkin wrote that the military began to hit villages inhabited by the PKK in northern Iraq with artillery fire and special forces began operations. When the Iraqi Kurdish leaders realized that the situation was serious, they began to pressure the PKK. Later the U.S. and Turkey assigned special envoys.

Yetkin wrote that on September 27, Special Envoys Ralston and Baser talked on the phone through a TGS secure line. Ralston reportedly asked Baser how the U.S. should react to the PKK's floating of a ceasefire. Baser responded by stressing that accepting the PKK as an interlocutor would be a grave mistake. The same day, Yetkin asserted, Ralston told the press that the PKK should lay down its arms and renounce violence. Meanwhile, Ankara heard that Ralston declined Barzani's appeal to persuade Turkey to offer an amnesty for the PKK.

Yetkin claimed these developments led the GOT to believe that the appointment of a U.S. special envoy was bringing results in its fight against the PKK. Yetkin commented that U.S.-Turkish relations remain tense because of the PKK's presence in Iraq but that Turkey was somewhat reassured about U.S. intentions in this issue.

WILSON